

'A sad day for journalism'

As societies around the world grapple with ways to combat fake news, the *Huffington Post South Africa* has found itself in the headlines for all the wrong reasons. **Legalbrief** reports that it chose to publish an article entitled 'Could It Be Time To Deny White Men The Franchise?' as the country grapples with ways to deal with deep-rooted racial tensions. The article went viral around the world after members of the conservative media in the US started linking to it on Twitter and in online articles on websites such as Breitbart.com. The posting of the piece was initially defended by *HuffPost SA*'s editor, Verashni Pillay, but it was withdrawn on Friday after it was established that the author ('Shelley Garland') probably did not exist. A report on the **Politicsweb** site notes that it was subsequently established that the company had fallen for a race hoax after the author – a self-described white male from Johannesburg who requested continued anonymity – contacted the *Renegade Report* on *CliffCentral.com* to explain how he had pulled it off. In the article, 'Garland' claimed that white men had been responsible for various setbacks to the progressive cause over the past few years – including Brexit, the election of Donald Trump and the victory of the DA in a number of metros in last year's local government elections in SA. 'She' suggested one solution to the problem of continued white male influence was to deny white men the vote over a generation. On Sunday, the real author of the article reached out to Roman Cabanac and Jonathan Witt of the libertarian online radio programme, the *Renegade Report*, explaining how he had pulled off the hoax. He added: 'Saying white men should be stripped of the franchise is absurd, as well as racist and sexist, and **the *Huffington Post* should be ashamed for publishing such regressive tripe**. White men, should not be ashamed of who they are, and nor should anyone else, no matter their race or gender.'